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AIRGRAM

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

A-086

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TO : Department of State
EO 11652: GDS
DEPT PASS: Managua, Tegucigalpa, San Jose, San Salvador, Belize, USCINCSO
TAGS: PINS, SHUM, GT
FROM : Amembassy GUATEMALA
DATE: July 12, 1976
SUBJECT : Political Violence During Laugerud's Second Year
REF : Guatemala A-135 of 21 July 1975

SUMMARY: There is a sharp contrast between internal security statistics for the last six months of 1975 and the first five months of 1976. The last six months of 1975 were probably the most peaceful in the last eight years, while the first five months of 1976 have shown an overall increase in political violence. Statistics for 1976, however, do not bear out DCG leader René de León Schlotter's June 1976 testimony before a U.S. congressional subcommittee that Guatemala is being subjected to new waves of violence comparable to the one during the 1966-67 counter-insurgency campaign or those of the Arana administration.

Increased provocation from terrorists has had much to do with the upsurge in violence. Since the Laugerud administration's sine qua non for a "satisfactory" internal security situation is control of violent subversive activity, it has come as no surprise that the GOG has been quite willing to act energetically to meet the "new challenge" from the left.

[REDACTED]

END SUMMARY.

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FORM 4-62 DS-323

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Contents and Classification Approved by: [Signature]

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY [Signature] DATE Oct 1981
PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

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Statistics. This report covers the period July 1975 to May 1976. Statistics for this eleven-month period show a striking contrast between the last six months of 1975 and the first five months of 1976. The average number of incidents per month during July-December 1975 was 15.3; during the first five months of 1976, the average jumped to 28.8 per month. For the eleven-month period, the monthly average was 21.4. Incidents during Laugerud's first year in office (July 1974 to June 1975) averaged 36.6 per month. During the last year of Arana's presidency (July 1973 to June 1974) incidents averaged 57.2 per month (see attached graph).

However harshly one may judge the rise in violence since January 1976, the statistics simply do not bear out DCG leader René de Leon Schlotter's June 1976 testimony before a U.S. congressional sub-committee to the effect that Guatemala is being subjected to another "wave of violence" comparable to the ones in the 1966-67 counter-insurgency campaign in Zacapa or during the Arana administration. A conservative Embassy estimate of the number of guerrillas killed during the 1966-1967 Zacapa campaign (300) is still more than twice as high as the total number of incidents nation-wide between January and May 1976. The January to May statistics also show a rate less than half of what it was during Arana's last year.

1975 - A Very Good Year. It is no exaggeration to say that 1975, and particularly the second half of the year, was the most peaceful period Guatemala has experienced for at least eight years. There was a drop in both the quantity and significance of reported violence, both in the urban and rural areas.

Except for a sweep (which did not become public knowledge until January 1976) through rural Huehuetenango Department following the June 1975 assassination of a retired MLN activist, the GOG engaged in no major operations against terrorists during the second half of the year. In one case, the GOG suffered, and endured, a defeat in court - three women arrested following the December 1974 shootout between GOG and community party (PGT) forces were acquitted and freed. The GOG must certainly not have been pleased by the outcome, but it did not overturn the ruling either by pressure or extra-legal means.

The relative tranquility was due to two things: (a) debilitation of terrorist groups, and (b) government restraint in the absence of violent provocation. Between late December 1974 and April 1975, the PGT suffered major reverses - the party secretary general and at least three other operational commanders were killed by the

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government. None of the other terrorist groups except the EGP pulled off any major incidents during the year. The EGP, apart from its assassination of Arenas in Huehuetenango Department, was inactive, apparently organizing itself, until December 1975, when it assassinated right-wing congressman Bernal Hernandez Castellon.

In the absence of terrorist provocation, government forces did not initiate "search and destroy" operations against these groups, except for the sweep through Huehuetenango. Other forces of the right.

1976 - EGP Takes On Kjell. The December 12, 1975, assassination of MLN congressman Bernal Hernandez marked the end of the year's tranquil period. In a way, though, the success of the attempt illustrates how quiet the period had been; even one of Arana's former bodyguards had been lulled into unpreparedness by the six months of calm.

The EGP followed up the Hernandez killing with several other spectaculars, such as the killing of an Army colonel in April, a gun store robbery in April, and the burning of trucks carrying coffee from El Quiche Department in May. The government has been unable to solve any of these.

Apparently of greater concern to the GOG were reports of the EGP's presence in northern Quiche Department, particularly around the Ixil-speaking towns of Nebaj, Chajul, and Cotzal. GOG forces were sufficiently concerned to go to the area in force after the Corps of Detectives made an initial investigation. The Air Force's A-37B jet fighters were used to bomb suspected guerrillas, and on the ground peasants were reportedly terrorized by groups of armed unknowns who hauled them out of their houses and took them away;

The government's response in Quiche demonstrates the Guatemalan Army's deep fear that rural guerrilla groups will manage to become entrenched, thereby making it difficult to dislodge them without a bloody campaign as in Zacapa in 1966-67. The Army is willing to act early and harshly to prevent terrorists from taking root again.

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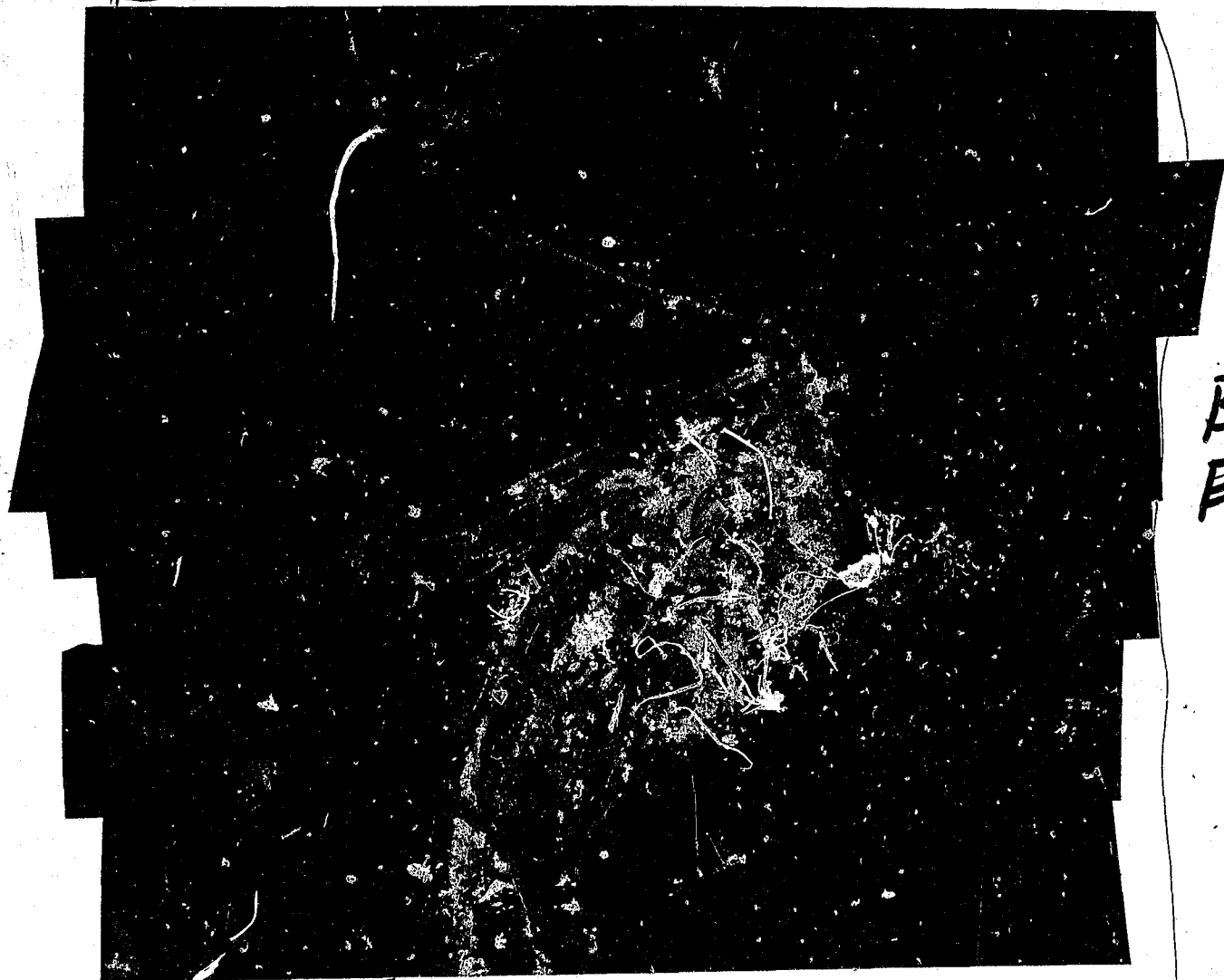
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Enclosure:
Incidents of Political Violence
February 1974 - May 1976

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INCIDENTS OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN GUATEMALA, FEBRUARY 1974 - MAY 1976

Estadística A-3
ARA

- ① 36.6 July 1974 to June 1975
- ② 21.6 July 1975 to May 1976

